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SUBJECT: PM CHIEF OF STAFF DISCUSSES THE ARREST WARRANT FOR
THE MINISTER OF CULTURE

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Daniel Speckhard for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: On June 27, DCM Dan Speckhard met with Iraqi Prime Minister's Chief of Staff Dr. Tariq Abdullah, at the latter's request to deliver a message from the Prime Minister. Dr. Tariq relayed that the PM is concerned that the U.S. might assist Minister of Culture Asad Al-Hashimi evade his arrest warrant and flee Iraq. DCM assured Dr. Tariq that the U.S. had no plan to help Minister Al-Hashimi evade justice. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Prime Minister Chief of Staff Dr. Tariq Abdullah explained to DCM that the Prime Minister was concerned about Adnan Duleimi's (Sunni - Iraqi People's Conference) statement that the U.S. Embassy would help Minister of Culture As'ad Al-Hashimi evade his arrest warrant and escape the country. DCM assured Dr. Tariq that no one in the U.S. was thinking of helping the Minister of Culture evade justice in Iraq.

¶3. (C) DCM expressed interest to know how the PM would manage the political impact of this case. DCM stated that Vice President Tariq Al-Hashimi had expressed as much anger to the Ambassador over the way that it had happened, as that it had happened. DCM explained that as a coalition partner, we do not presume to be able to judge the merits of the individual cases, but we are concerned that high level cases are occurring without sectarian balance. DCM stated that, for example, General Mahdi is a Shia and is a senior official in the Ministry of Interior against whom there is much evidence as well as an arrest warrant, yet he is still free.

¶4. (C) Dr. Tariq asserted that the two cases are different. In the case of General Mahdi, the case concerns crimes of integrity, which have an administrative procedure allowing Ministers to suspend the proceedings while they conduct their own independent inquiry. "This is why the General is still free," said Dr. Tariq. But in the case of Minister of Culture Asad Al-Hashimi, the case concerns criminal charges and the warrant was issued by the judicial authorities, explained Dr. Tariq. "Can the PM suspend the proceedings against Minister Hashimi in the same manner the Minister of the Interior suspended proceedings against General Mahdi?" asked the DCM. "No," answered Dr. Tariq, "the PM cannot interfere with the judicial authorities."

¶5. (C) While not wanting to interfere in the judicial and legal processes, the DCM pressed for the PM to take political action and reach out in a cross-sectarian manner to discuss the issue, rather than simply declare from his office that he can't touch it. "Even your best friends have the impression that the law is not being applied evenly," said the DCM.

¶6. (C) Dr. Tariq responded that the Prime Minister does not distinguish between Shia and Sunni ministers, and the PM will not intervene on a judicial issue. The PM does not have a discriminatory viewpoint, emphasized Dr. Tariq. DCM answered

that we have always felt that the PM is "a man of integrity - honest, not corrupt, and concerned with the fate of all Iraqis." DCM reminded Dr. Tariq of the repeated messages of support from the President of the United States. At the same time, the DCM encouraged the PM to recognize the importance of managing these incidents in a way that does not inflame sectarian tensions and undermine the Government.

17. (C) Dr. Tariq admitted that "perhaps the Government has a problem in the judicial departments, which conceal evidence in Shia cases, but are prompt to publicize Sunni cases." "But it is not the PM's doing, and when we identify it, we try to stop it," assured Dr. Tariq. He welcomed the Embassy bringing to the attention of the Prime Minister examples of judicial discrimination, and the Prime Minister would work to correct them, by moving, replacing, or firing the judges. DCM closed by saying he would relay the PM's concerns about Duleimi's statement to the Ambassador and Washington.

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